

## Promoting or demoting democracy abroad? US and German reactions to the rise of political Islam in Turkey

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PRIF-Report No. 106

# **Promoting or Demoting Democracy Abroad?**

US and German reactions to the rise  
of political Islam in Turkey

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## Summary

The USA and Germany are the most important donors of foreign and development assistance to Turkey. Both countries have been faced with Islamic to Islamist government parties following the democratic accession to power of the Welfare Party (RP) in 1996/97 and, in particular, the one-party rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002. Putting it drastically, the donors are confronted with the following dilemma: Either they tolerate the omnipotent role of the semi-authoritarian Kemalist state elite (particularly the military and judiciary) in order to protect Turkey's secular political system and pro-western orientation. Or they believe the Islamic parties' avowals of democracy and respect their right to self determination – although, if one is to believe the Kemalists, these parties are in fact seeking the covert “Islamization” of state and society and Turkey's “turning away from the West”. Both alternatives are contrary to the liberal-democratic norms and the national economic and security interests of the donor countries. This study sets out to examine how the USA and Germany are dealing with this conflict of norms and interests in their policies towards Turkey: it covers the period 1995 to 2010.

There is no doubt that the election victories of the RP and AKP governments were both the result and manifestation of a successful process of democratization. But the case of the AKP government in particular shows that the transition of Turkish democracy into a post-Kemalist era was both inconsistent and inconclusive during the period under study: Thanks to its decided policy of democratization, the Erdogan government was able to secure the beginning of negotiations on EU accession in 2005. Its successful economic policy also heralded the start of the longest economic upswing in the country's history. Nevertheless, the AKP government has politicized Islam and has become increasingly authoritarian in recent years in order to safeguard its power.

The complexity and contradictory nature of the Turkish process of transformation is making it difficult for the USA and Germany to determine the “right” way to deal with Turkey, whereby different interests also play a role in their respective policies: As far as the USA is concerned, geostrategic interests are the main determining factor in its foreign and development policy towards Turkey. Germany's interests, on the other hand, are largely dominated by the unique interaction between German domestic and foreign policy and Turkish domestic and foreign policy (domestic-foreign interdependency). This is due to the fact that the world's largest Turkish diaspora (2.5 million people) lives in Germany, which fears that inner-Turkish conflicts could “spill over” and also affect Germany. Consequently, Germany's interest in democracy, human rights and stability in Turkey also aims at protecting inner-societal peace and stability in Germany itself. During the period under study, both donor countries demonstrated flexibility and pragmatism and supported those political powers which appeared to best meet their own respective interests.

The USA's dealings with political Islam and the Kemalist state elite between 1995 and 2010 are characterized by both continuity and change. The USA endeavoured to cooperate pragmatically with the RP and AKP governments in order to protect its national interests. However, the pursuit of own interests in Turkish domestic, foreign and economic policy confronted Washington with the classic conflict of interests and norms and this led to a breach of trust with both Islamic governments. By referring to the controversial “constitutionally legitimate”

role of the Kemalist institutions of power (military and judiciary) as correctives and veto players in politics, the USA undermined not only the political legitimacy of the RP and AKP governments, but also its own claim to be a resolute “freedom fighter” for more democracy worldwide. However, a change did take place in US foreign assistance and development cooperation. After 2001 – and in contrast to the 1990s – the USA granted funds to Turkey without applying strict conditions regarding issues of democracy and human rights. Even so, US foreign assistance can be interpreted as aiming to strengthen the “counterbalance” to the one-party rule of the AKP since it included in particular increases in military aid, funds for training the Turkish military, and development cooperation commitments in the fields of civil society, elections and political participation.

As a “civilian power”, Germany’s dealings with political Islam and the Kemalist elite also demonstrated both continuity and change in the period under study, but differed from those of the USA: There was continuity regarding the largely unconditional provision of development assistance (ODA) – this is due to the special domestic and foreign policy interdependency of the bilateral relations. Nevertheless, German ODA is being reduced according to schedule due to Turkey’s positive socioeconomic development and the beginning of negotiations on EU accession in 2005.

The changes in Germany’s dealings with Turkey refer to its different relations with the RP and AKP governments. Berlin conspicuously maintained its reserve both over the threatened coup against the Islamist RP as well as over the forced resignation of Prime Minister Erbakan in the mid-1990s – here there are parallels with the USA. Although the German side criticized the ban on the RP in a joint statement with the EU, on the whole there can be no mention of Berlin demonstrating a “value-oriented” foreign policy with regard to the RP. Evidently Germany considered the politics and activities of the Islamist Erbakan to be more problematical than the authoritarian, Kemalist counter-measures which aimed at a change of policy and government. Germany’s relationship with the Erdogan government is different. The German perception of the AKP differed from that of the USA in that it was largely positive until the AKP became more authoritarian. Berlin supported the AKP government as the guarantor of stability and democracy in the inner-Turkish struggle for power. This support was based on the following factors: (a) There was a change of paradigm on the German side, whereby the Kemalist state ideology was regarded as not very democratic and in need of reform – an enhanced conflict sensitivity is visible here; (b) the AKP has been democratically elected and legitimated on several occasions and enjoys the wide support of the Turkish people; (c) the “civilian power” Germany respects the democratic self-determination of its partner country Turkey. Furthermore, the AKP is regarded as the political power which best meets German interests. These are first and foremost the strengthening of democracy and human rights (particularly with regard to domestic-foreign reciprocity), but also Turkey’s economic stability. The latter does not only alleviate German fears of poverty-induced immigration, but also benefits Germany as a global export nation.

Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies on the German side: Berlin – like Washington – has avoided making official demands regarding increased rights for (Sunni) Muslims in Kemalist Turkey (e.g. the headscarf issue) or moves to lower the 10% electoral threshold, the highest in Europe. Both donor countries were confronted with the conflicting goals of “protection against

Islamization vs. religious freedom for Muslims” and “democratic participation vs. stability and governability”. In both cases, the USA and Germany have reacted passively rather than taking active measures to resolve these conflicts.

A further contradiction as far as Germany is concerned is the mainly culturalist politicization of Turkey’s EU accession and the years of discussions about the “Privileged Partnership” that have served party political interests. Germany shares responsibility for the slackening pace of the Turkish process of EU reform and democratization and for the fact that the Erdogan government is looking elsewhere for more reliable political partners. The fact that this is undermining the EU’s policy of conditionality, one of the strongest norms for democratization in the world, as well as Germany’s credibility in calling attention to minority rights in Turkey is a central inconsistency in both Germany’s EU and Turkish policies. At the same time, the row over Turkey’s accession is undermining Germany’s own claims to being a “civilian power”. Nevertheless, it can be said that Germany focused more than the USA on promoting democracy in its bilateral relationship with Turkey during the period under study.

The analyses showed that there has been both a qualitative enhancement of democracy and a perpetuation of the defects inherent in the Kemalist system of democracy in Turkey. Whilst this paradox is primarily due to endogenous determining factors, it is encouraged by the contradictory foreign, European and development policies of both donor countries.

The analyses also drew the following implications i.a. for “western” promoters of democracy in Turkey and in other Muslim states: (a) It is important for the donors to clarify in advance fundamental questions regarding the treatment of Islamic symbols as well as their own understanding of democracy and human rights. (b) For the sake of their own credibility, the donor countries should respect the results of democratic elections in Muslim states and exercise caution before choosing their partners. (c) The promotion of democracy “from the outside” is only credible and sustainable if the own Muslim minority does not suffer discrimination. (d) Turkey and other Muslim states enter into cooperation with authoritarian regimes in order to safeguard their own national interests in the same way as most “western” donor countries – this should not be rashly regarded as a “turning away from the West”.





## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Object of the study	1
1.2 Definition of terms and explanations	2
<b>2. The framework of democracy promotion: US-Turkish and German-Turkish bilateral relations since 1990</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 USA-Turkey	4
2.2 Germany-Turkey	6
<b>3. How the USA and Germany dealt with the Welfare Party (RP)</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Rise, policy and ban on the RP	10
3.2 US-American perceptions and reactions	11
3.3 German perceptions and reactions	12
<b>4. How the USA and Germany dealt with the Justice and Development Party (AKP)</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Turkey on its way into the “post-Kemalist” era? The assumption of office, policies and impact of the AKP	14
4.2 US-American perceptions and reactions	17
4.3 German perceptions and reactions	23
<b>5. Results</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6. Implications for “western” promoters of democracy in Turkey and in other Muslim states</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Annex</b>	<b>37</b>



# 1. Introduction\*

## 1.1 Object of the study

*"You believe in the Almighty, and I believe in the Almighty.  
That's why we'll be great partners."*

US President Bush to AKP Chairman Erdogan

The promotion of democracy and human rights is the declared foreign and development policy objective of both the USA and Germany. In almost all their fair-weather speeches, politicians from both countries like to emphasize the relevance of "value-oriented" foreign policy and development cooperation, which not only pursue national economic and security interests but also attach equal importance to questions of democracy and human rights. If one is to believe the national security strategies and development policy guidelines of both countries, the strengthening of democratic market-economy regimes serves the promotion of peace, security and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> So much for rhetoric! In actual fact, two of the world's biggest donor countries in the field of democracy promotion, the USA and Germany, are often confronted with processes of political transition where they have to decide between their own interests and own normative preferences and the democratic self-determination of the recipient country. This report focuses on how the two donor countries deal with this conflict of interests and norms in their policy towards Turkey.

The USA and Germany are the most important donors of foreign and development assistance to Turkey. Both countries were faced with Islamic to Islamist government parties in Turkey following the democratic accession to power of the Welfare Party (RP) in 1996/97 and, in particular, the one-party rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002. Putting it drastically, this confronts the donors with the following dilemma: (1) Either they tolerate the omnipotent role and restrictive measures of the semi-authoritarian Kemalist state elite in the interest of protecting Turkey's secular political system and pro-western orientation. Or (2) they adhere to their own postulate of democracy and respect the formation of a government by these parties and their right to self determination – even though, according to the Kemalists,

\* This study is the updated version of the German-language HSFK-Report no. 12/2010. It is based i.a. on interviews and background talks that were conducted in 2009 and 2010 in the USA, Germany and Turkey with representatives of the respective governments and the EU Commission, as well as with politicians, NGOs, political foundations, researchers and journalists. Some of the results were presented at the Conference of the ECPR Standing Group on International Relations (September 2010). The author is grateful to Thomas Carothers, Richard Youngs and numerous members of staff at the HSFK for their comments on previous versions of the study and to Stefan Priestersbach and Nihat Karagöz for their research work.

1 Cf. the National Security Strategies of the USA since 1996, the White Papers on German Security Policy (1994, 2006) and the Concept Papers of the USA (1998, 2005) and Germany (1991, 2005, 2009) on promoting democracy and good governance.

these parties are in fact seeking the covert “Islamization” of the Turkish state and society and Turkey’s “turning away from the West”. Both alternatives are contrary to liberal-democratic norms as well as to the national economic and security interests of the donor countries.

The report considers the following question: In how far did US and German reactions to the accession to power and politics of the RP and AKP and to the inner-Turkish power struggle differ; and how can one explain these differences? This empirical study, which covers the period between 1995 and 2010, begins by presenting an analysis of the bilateral relations in order to determine the US and German interests and the profile of development cooperation with Turkey. This is followed by a retrospective analysis of the RP and its treatment by the donor countries. The main part of the report goes on to study the policies and actions of the AKP as well as US and German reactions to the transformation or “Islamization” of Turkish democracy, with a particular focus on the promotion of democracy by the external donors. The report ends with a comparative conclusion and implications for “western” promoters of democracy in Turkey and in other Muslim states.

## 1.2 Definition of terms and explanations

This study describes those countries which conduct development cooperation as *donor states* or *donor countries* (in brief: *donors*). *Recipient* or *partner countries* are those countries which receive development assistance. In many cases, emerging countries are both donors as well as recipient countries. In this report, the USA and Germany are the donor countries and Turkey is the recipient country. The contributions made within the framework of development cooperation are called *Official Development Assistance* (ODA). The term *foreign assistance* goes further and includes all assistance from the donor state to the partner country, including loans and military assistance which would not qualify as ODA. The ODA which a donor country approves for a recipient country in a fiscal year is called a *commitment*. The actual transfer of ODA is called a *disbursement*. In many cases, commitments and disbursements differ in a single fiscal year (cf. Tables in Annex). This is because it can take several years for a commitment to be paid out for accounting or political reasons, or different instalments of commitments are all transferred at the same time (OECD 2011).

The term *Islamic* has a socio-cultural and ritual dimension and describes thoughts and actions that are based on the value canon of the Koran. As 99% of the Turkish population officially profess to be Muslim, Turkish society can be described as Islamic. However, Turkey is not an *Islamic state* because Islam is not the official state religion nor is Islamic law, the Sharia, the basis for jurisdiction. The terms *political Islam* and *Islamism* or *Islamist* are used synonymously in this context. They describe an ideology according to which Islam is the central characteristic of a political identity. Here political and ethical claims to power are justified by referring to the “universal validity” of the Koran. Public life as a whole (e.g. justice, culture, education, economy) is to be shaped according to religious specifications so that it is in harmony with the Sharia (Esposito 2004).

*Kemalism* is the term used to describe the principles of social and state doctrine formulated in 1931 by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), the founder of the Turkish state. Only three of the origi-

nal six principles are still relevant in modern-day Turkey: “Republicanism”, “Nationalism” and “Secularism”. This “Kemalist Trinity” was anchored in the still valid (military) constitution of 1982, following the military coup in 1980. The Kemalist interpretation of republicanism does not emphasize the relevance of the *res publica*, the common good, but the superordinate position of the state’s sovereignty and its organs (“state power”) vis-a-vis the sovereignty of the people (“people power”). It justifies the omnipotent character of the state in Turkey. According to this reasoning, the state is not the instrument of politics, but politics must serve the state (Kramer 2004b). Several state institutions have committed themselves by their very function to protecting the Kemalist principles. These institutions, the so-called *Kemalist state elite*, include among others the Turkish military and the National Security Council, the office of the State President, the religious affairs directorate (Diyanet) and parts of the judiciary, e.g. the Constitutional Court and the State Public Prosecutor. They have remarkable competences and opportunities to exert political influence, as has been demonstrated by three coups in the past (1960, 1971, 1980) and by numerous bans on political parties (Jung 2001).

Further characteristics of the Kemalist system are the inadequate separation of powers and the highest electoral threshold in Europe at 10% – this is intended to stabilize the political system (Parla 1991: 103f; Kramer 2004b: 7). The Kemalist concept of nationalism, on the other hand, manifests itself i.a. in limited minority rights for Kurds, Alevis<sup>2</sup> and Christians, as well as in the infamous Paragraph 301 of the Penal Code (Smith 2005). This makes “insulting the Turkish nation” a punishable offence, as happened in the case of Literature Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk, and seriously interferes with freedom of expression, press freedom and any critical discussion of the Turkish-Kurdish and Turkish-Armenian past.

The Kemalist interpretation of secularism is also particular. “Secular” Turkey does not, as one would expect, apply the principle of neutrality towards all religions; instead the state is committed to providing ideal and financial support solely to Sunni Islam, the majority religion, thus unofficially elevating it to the status of a state religion. Moreover, the Kemalist state possesses a monopoly on the interpretation of the Sunni faith. For example, the headscarf is regarded as a political symbol and may not be worn by public sector employees (Göle 1996).

2 Of Turkey’s approx. 75 million people, around 15-20% are Alevis. Alevism is the product of a religious-historical development in the 13/14 century which incorporated Muslim, Christian and Gnostic elements and combined them to form an autonomous religious community. It differs considerably from the majority Sunni Islam: For example, the “Five Pillars of Islam” do not apply for Alevis; furthermore they do not pray in mosques but in their own houses of worship. There is no separation of the sexes during worship, women are not veiled. During the period of the Ottoman Empire, the Alevis were considered heretics and persecuted. There have also been individual anti-Alevi pogroms since the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923), i.a. in the 1970s and the 1990s. Cf. Vorhoff 2000.

## **2. The framework of democracy promotion: US-Turkish and German-Turkish bilateral relations since 1990**

### **2.1 USA-Turkey**

The USA has close relations with Turkey which are still influenced primarily by geostrategic interests even following the end of the Cold War. NATO-partner Turkey is regarded by the USA as being a “pivotal state” because it is in the immediate vicinity of 13 of the 16 centres of conflict identified by NATO. From the American point of view, this makes Turkey the most important “pivot” between the Balkans, the Caspian Bay and the Middle East (Makovsky 1999). A “strategic partnership” was agreed in 1999 – this provides for the intensification of bilateral cooperation on questions of policy, security and the economy (US Embassy Ankara 2011). Turkey’s strategic importance is reflected in US military aid and the presence of various US military bases in Turkey: Washington provided military assistance worth 14 billion USD between 1947 and 2007 (State Department 2011); this makes Turkey the third largest recipient of military assistance after Israel and Egypt. The most important US military base in the Near East is located at Incirlik in south-eastern Anatolia. Approximately three quarters of all US cargo flights to Iraq and Afghanistan were cleared at this base in 2007. Furthermore, 50 to 90 US nuclear weapons are stationed in Incirlik – that is to say, more than at any other single US base in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1990s, the USA sought the following concrete objectives with its policy towards Turkey: Active and passive Turkish support in the Iraq War to liberate Kuwait and in the subsequent surveillance of northern Iraqi airspace; a diplomatic solution to the Greek-Turkish disputes over border conflicts in the Aegean and over the Cyprus question in order to improve NATO interoperability; improvements in Turkish-Armenian relations following the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; a peaceful solution to the Turkish-Kurdish conflict in order to stabilize the country domestically; and the opening of prospects of accession to the European Union (EU) in order to strengthen Turkey’s institutional ties with the “West”. Further important objectives were the world-wide isolation of what America considers the “rogue states” of Iran, Syria and Libya in the interest of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and containing terrorism, and the initiation of the Turkish-Israeli partnership (Larrabee 2008; Isyar 2005; Lesser 2007). The Turkish-Israeli agreement was signed in 1996 and was described by President Bill Clinton as “one of the most important political developments in the region since the 1991 Gulf War” (quoted from Gresh 1998: 203).

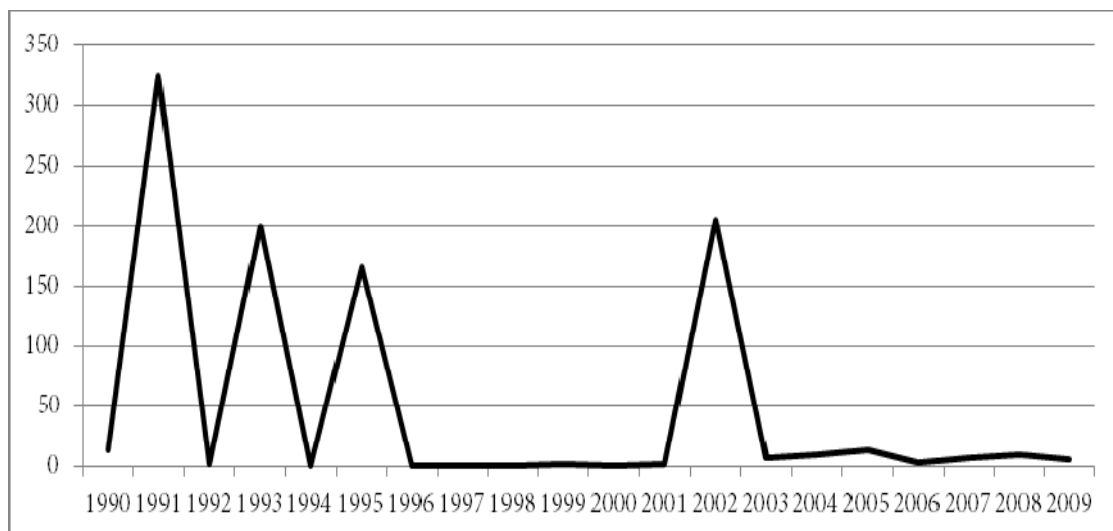
Bilateral relations expanded in 1999 when, on the initiative of the Clinton administration and against the will of Russia, it was agreed to build an oil pipeline from Baku via Tiflis to Ceyhan on the Turkish Mediterranean coast. Not only did this pipeline secure US economic and energy

3 “Incirlik Becomes Major Host for American Nuclear Weapons” in: Turkish Daily News, 30.6.2008.

interests, it also strengthened Turkey's role as an energy hub. Furthermore, it enhanced the country's political importance: For the first time, a pipeline which did not lead through Russia, Iran or Iraq was supplying the "West" with oil (Boyer/Katulis 2008: 21). A further change in US-Turkish relations occurred following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001: Ankara was not only to assist in the planned mission to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, it was also to support the USA in the fight against international terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan (ISAF). For the USA, this is primarily of symbolic significance as a measure to prevent the ISAF mission from being interpreted as a "crusade" of Christian states against the Islamic world. This normative dimension is a new element in the security relations: Turkey is regarded by the USA as a "model" or "inspiration" for other Muslim states (Taspinar 2005: 9).

The USA sees itself as a "beacon of democracy" and an exemplary "city upon a hill". As a missionary "freedom fighter", it supports efforts to strengthen democracy and human rights throughout the world, using confrontational means if necessary (Nau 2000; Monten 2005; Spanger/Wolff 2007). Turkey's significance for the USA as a "freedom fighter" is not only reflected in the security partnership but also in development cooperation – US disbursements of ODA amounted to approximately 968 million USD between 1990 and 2009 (cf. also Table 1 of the Annex):

**Figure 1: US American ODA disbursements to Turkey, figures in million USD**



The main providers of US democracy assistance to Turkey are the USAID development agency, the State Department and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) foundation.

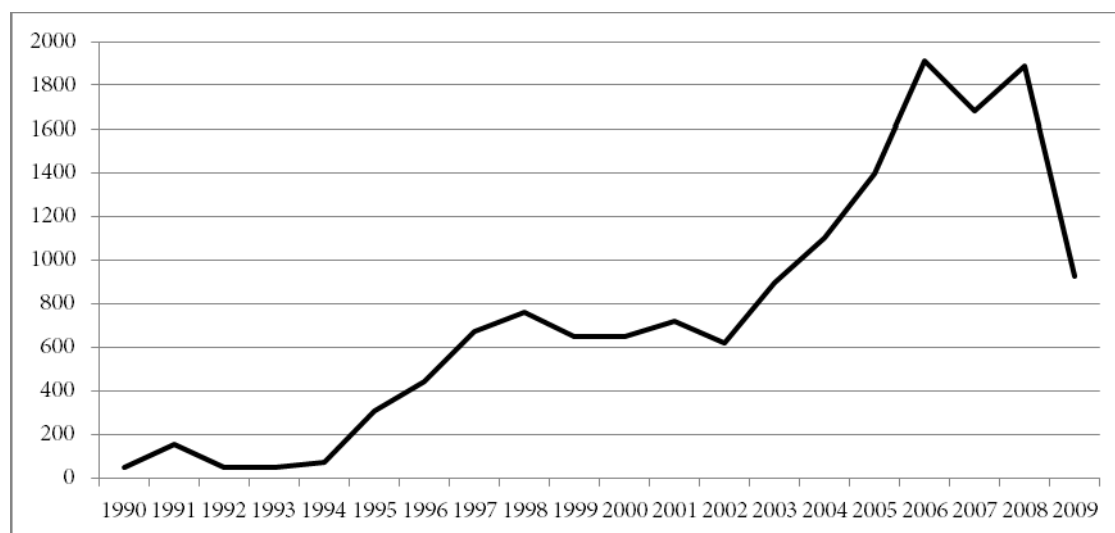
The Turkey programme that was funded by USAID in the 1990s covered measures to improve regional development and birth control and to combat poverty and unemployment. US assistance in the 2000s was intended i.a. to compensate Turkey for the socioeconomic losses incurred as a result of the fight against Kurdish terrorism (USAID 2011). Since the 1990s, the State Department has been funding various democratization projects involving religious freedom and human rights through individual grants from the "Human Rights and Democracy Fund" (HRDF). Another interesting factor in the Turkish context is the "International Military



Education and Training” (IMET) programme for foreign officers, which is also funded by the State Department but does not qualify as ODA. Officers training under this programme are not only taught improved operability between their own and the US army, they also learn, for example, about the (subordinate) “role of the military in a democracy”.<sup>4</sup> Ankara has received more than 50 million USD in IMET funds since 1990 (US Overseas 2011; CBJ 2011).

As a private organization which receives the major part of its funding from the State Department and Congress, the private NED foundation primarily supports democratization projects in Turkey through its two main party-affiliated organizations, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). NED has been providing funding since the 1990s, particularly to projects in the field of human rights, good governance, civil society, effective parliamentary work, rule of law and political participation. It approved funds totalling approximately 15 million USD between 1990 and 2009 (cf. also Table 3):

**Figure 2: NED grants for projects related to Turkey, figures in thousand USD**



## 2.2 Germany-Turkey

Germany and Turkey also maintain close relations, whereby “traditional friendship” and the “human factor” officially play an important role (German Embassy Ankara 2011). A major feature of German-Turkish relations is domestic-foreign interdependency or reciprocity, that is to say, the interaction between German domestic and foreign policy and Turkish domestic and foreign policy. This is because approximately 2.5 million people of Turkish origin now live

4 Verbatim: “The objectives of the IMET program are to: [...] Expose foreign military and civilian personnel to the important roles democratic values and internationally recognized human rights can play in governance and military operations”. Cf. [www.state.gov/t/pm/65533.htm](http://www.state.gov/t/pm/65533.htm) (15.10.2011).

in Germany as a result of the recruitment of “guest workers” during the 1960s and the subsequent process of family reunification. This is the biggest Turkish diaspora in the world. However, these people – 700,000 of whom have taken German citizenship – do not represent a homogeneous group, but have many sub-identities (Turks, Kurds, Alevis, Sunnis, secular, etc.), whereby each group has its own advocacy groups. There are numerous examples of domestic-foreign interdependency: e.g. the racist attacks on migrants of Turkish origin in the first half of the 1990s (Solingen, Mölln); the “misuse” of German weapons by the Turkish government in the fight against the PKK Kurdish underground movement; the tightening of asylum law (1993); the “spill-over” of Turkish-Kurdish conflicts to affect the diaspora in Germany; the voting recommendations of Turkish politicians for voters of Turkish origin in Germany; the campaign against dual citizenship (1999); the increasing Islamophobia that is also evident in Germany following the attacks of 11 September 2001; or the tightening of citizenship procedures and immigration law (2007).<sup>5</sup>

These incidents not only caused turbulences in the bilateral relations, but also revealed Germany’s desire for inner-societal peace and internal stability as a national interest (Steinbach 1994: 82; Kramer 2004a: 93). This led, for example, to the ban on the Kurdish PKK in Germany (1993) and to close bilateral cooperation with Turkey over the arrest of German-Turkish terrorist suspects (e.g. the “Sauerland Group”). Germany’s policy towards Turkey, however, is not only strongly influenced by internal interests regarding questions of integration or domestic security but also regarding questions of European Union policy. Germany, along with France and Austria, is the country which has witnessed the most controversial discussions on Turkey’s EU membership across all party political lines (Leggewie 2004).

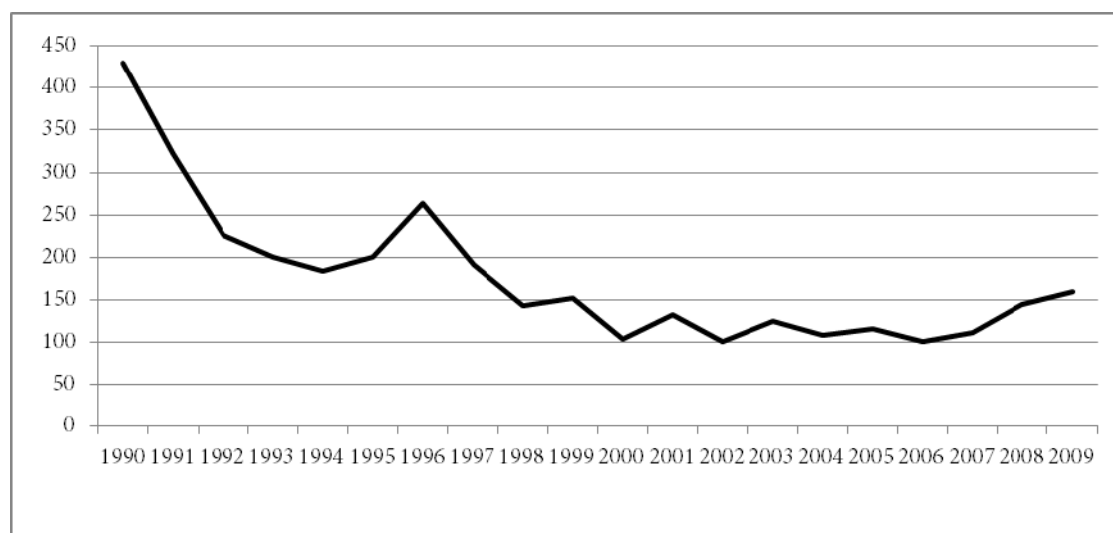
In contrast, the close economic relations between the two countries can be described as trouble-free. Germany is Turkey’s most important trading partner. German companies accounted for the largest share of foreign direct investments in Turkey – the number of German companies and Turkish companies with German financial involvement in Turkey rose to approximately 4,000 in 2010. The volume of foreign trade amounted to approximately 26.1 billion EUR in 2010, with Germany achieving a foreign trade surplus of just under 6.3 billion EUR. Turkey is thus one of Germany’s largest non-EU economic partners (GTAI 2011; DTR-IHK 2011).

Germany sees its own foreign policy role as that of a “civilian power”. Unlike the USA, it does not embrace a confrontational “freedom fighter” philosophy, but adopts a gradualist-evolutionary and cooperative-integrationist philosophy of external democratization (Kirste/Maull 1996; Spanger/Wolff 2007). The close relations between Germany as a trading partner and “civilian power” and Turkey are also reflected in the area of development cooperation: Germany is the world’s largest donor country to Turkey. German development cooperation began in 1958. However, it is scheduled to end in the course of the next few years due to Turkey’s positive socioeconomic development and following the start of negotiations on EU acces-

5 Cf. Kramer 2007, 2004a; Pratt Ewing 2003; Refflinghaus 2001; Weick 2000.

sion (2005). One of the last new commitments was approved in 2008; ODA totalling approximately 3.5 billion USD was approved between 1990 and 2009 (cf. also Table 1):

**Figure 3: German ODA disbursements to Turkey, figures in million USD**



The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is the government department responsible for development cooperation through its quasi-state agencies, the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)<sup>6</sup> and the Reconstruction Credit Institute (KfW). The main aim of cooperation in the 1990s was to reduce socioeconomic inequity in order, among other things, to counteract the partly poverty-induced popularity of Islamist and Kurdish-extremist organizations as well as to reduce flows of migrants both within Turkey and to Germany (BMZ 1993, 1995). Up to 2010, the GTZ and KfW funded i.a. communal infrastructure and environmental projects, small and medium-sized businesses and capacity-building in administration and civil society. The main objectives of development cooperation were sustainable community development, the promotion of trade and industry, decentralization, and reducing regional disparity between the industrialized west of Turkey and the under-developed Kurdish south-east with its rapid population growth (BMZ 2009).<sup>7</sup>

6 Following the restructuring of German development cooperation at the beginning of 2011, the GTZ has now become integrated in the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

7 Germany is supporting Turkey under the development cooperation priority of “administrative capacity development” not only through direct measures but also indirectly. The European Commission is making funds available for twinning programmes. The aim is to use “German administrative experience” to modernize Turkish public institutions (ministries, police, customs, tax authorities, etc.) and to support them in implementing the *Acquis Communautaire*. Germany conducted 40% of all twinning measures with Turkey between 2004 and 2010 and thus takes first place among the EU Member States (German Embassy Ankara 2011).

Whereas the BMZ is primarily committed to Turkey's social-economic development, the German Federal Foreign Office focused on political topics during the period under study, for example questions of human rights, rule of law and religious freedom for the Christian minority, and conducted the "Dialogue with the Islamic World" (German Embassy Ankara 2011).

Other important German stakeholders are political foundations which are affiliated to political parties but work largely autonomously: particularly the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für Freiheit (FNF) and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (HBS), which all have their own liaison offices in Turkey.<sup>8</sup> During the 2000s, the foundations, with funding primarily from the BMZ, worked for example in the fields of good governance, rule of law, communal self-administration, human and minority rights, regional development, environment, trade unions, German-Turkish dialogue, gender issues, freedom of expression and press freedom.<sup>9</sup> They received BMZ commitments of over 45 million EUR for their work between 1990 and 2009 (cf. also Table 4):

**Figure 4: BMZ commitments to the foundations for projects related to Turkey, figures in thousand EUR**



8 The Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung (HSS) does not have a Turkey programme. The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS) has only been funding projects related to Turkey sporadically since mid-2000 and is not therefore included in the analysis (cf. Table 4).

9 Interviews with the foundations. Regarding the work of the German foundations in Turkey in the 1990s, cf. Hummen 1994; Duymaz 1994; Gorawantschy 1994.

### 3. How the USA and Germany dealt with the Welfare Party (RP)

#### 3.1 Rise, policy and ban on the RP

The RP (Refah Partisi) was established in 1983 and was considered to be the political arm of the “*Milli Görüş*” (National Outlook) movement, which had been founded by Necmettin Erbakan in the early 1970s. The aim of this movement was to introduce a “just”, i.e. Islamic, order in the state, society and economy (cf. Yürüsen/Yayla 1997). The RP won the parliamentary elections in December 1995, gaining 21% of the vote. It profited in particular from protest voters during a serious economic and financial crisis (1994), from its charity work nation-wide, and from its successful local government policies. Large cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, which had had RP mayors since 1994, had not only seen a reduction in corruption – as promised in the election campaign – but also an improvement in the quality of local services and environmental protection and the development of infrastructure (Akinci 1999). Further reasons for the RP’s election victory were support from the “*Anatolian bourgeoisie*”<sup>10</sup> and an above-average number of votes from the country’s under-developed, Kurdish-dominated South East and the rapidly growing poor districts of the larger cities (Karakas 2007).

As leader of the RP, Erbakan was elected Turkey’s first Islamist Prime Minister in June 1996 in a coalition with the DYP following the collapse of the fragile Kemalist-Conservative minority government under Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party (ANAP, *Anavatan Partisi*) and Tansu Ciller of the True Path Party (DYP, *Dogru Yol Partisi*). Although Erbakan had praised Sharia law during the election campaign, had openly displayed anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism and anti-Europeanism and spoken out in favour of Turkey leaving NATO, in his government declaration he promised to respect the country’s democratic-secular order and foreign policy course. In fact, for “reasons of national security” the new Prime Minister even extended the US-coordinated surveillance of Iraqi airspace from Turkish territory and respected the strategic partnership with Israel as well as the Customs Union with the EU, which had come into effect at the beginning of 1996.

Nevertheless, Erbakan did not pay an inaugural visit to either Germany or the USA. Instead, his trips abroad took him to the “rogue” states of Iran and Libya in order to intensify foreign trade relations. A comprehensive agreement on supplies of natural gas was signed with Iran in August 1996 – but this deal had already been initiated by the Kemalist predecessor government (Makovsky 1997). Inner-party criticism of the Prime Minister soon grew against the background of his failure in the fields of Kurdish and financial policy. There were also signs of a populist politicization of religion: Among other things, the RP imposed restrictions on the

10 The liberal economic policy of Prime Minister Turgut Özal (ANAP) triggered an economic upswing in the Anatolian provinces in the 1980s. Numerous companies established themselves on the world market, particularly producers and suppliers of components in the fields of textiles, leather goods, food and the building industry. This upturn produced a new middle-class, the “*Anatolian bourgeoisie*”. Well-educated professionals and entrepreneurs form the backbone of these Muslim middle class strata.

serving of alcohol in state canteens and demanded the lifting of the ban on wearing headscarves at universities, which had been introduced following the coup in 1980. Furthermore, some RP mayors had “immoral statues” removed from public spaces or, in individual cases, demanded the introduction of Sharia law (Karakas 2007). These acts fuelled public discussions between Islamists and Kemalists, but interestingly the military did not intervene in political affairs by staging a coup as they had done in the past. Instead the National Security Council introduced a catalogue of political and legal measures to combat Islamism, which Prime Minister Erbakan was obliged to sign or else resign.<sup>11</sup> It was this move by the military, which has gone down in history as the “soft coup”, together with increasing mass pro-Kemalist demonstrations that finally led to the loss of the RP-DYP’s coalition majority in parliament and Erbakan’s resignation in June 1997 after just one year in office (Akinci 1999). The way the Kemalists dealt with the RP confirms the theory of Cizre-Sakallioglu that “the constitution of 1982 entrenched the military’s veto power in the political system to such an extent that it has made crude military intervention into politics redundant” (Cizre-Sakallioglu 1997: 153f).

The RP was banned in 1998 and Erbakan was barred from political activities for five years. The European Court of Human Rights acknowledged the ban on the RP as being legal because it served the overriding need to protect the state and society. Leading RP politicians had not unambiguously distanced themselves from violence and had demanded the introduction of Sharia law on several occasions. This was contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey was also a party.<sup>12</sup>

### **3.2 US-American perceptions and reactions**

US-American perceptions and reactions with regard to the RP were inconsistent. Washington reacted guardedly to Erbakan’s election as Prime Minister (State Department 1996). It welcomed the extension of Iraqi air surveillance, which was coordinated in Turkey, but sharply criticized Erbakan’s trips to Libya and Iran, claiming that they undermined the international sanctions and jeopardized western solidarity.<sup>13</sup> Official appraisals of the effect of the RP were contradictory, however. Whereas the State Department emphasized the democratic legitimization of the RP-DYP government in a statement to Congress and considered the “Iranization” of Turkey to be unlikely (US-Congress 1997a), the Defense Department, which also sets out to impart democratic values through the IMET programme, ironically supported the “soft coup”: “Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, put great emphasis on the importance of maintaining a secular government in order to create a Turkish democracy, a principle that the Turkish military is constitutionally-mandated and determined to uphold” (US Congress 1997b). The USA

11 “US Quietly Welcomes Ultimatum to Welfare”, in: Turkish Daily News, 7.3.1997.

12 The ruling is available online at: <http://strasbourgconsortium.org/document.php?DocumentID=1142> (15.10.2011).

13 “New Turkish Chief’s Muslim Tour Stirs U.S. Worry”, The New York Times, 10.8.1996.

was against a “hard coup”, but had no objections to the use of civil measures by the military and the ban on the RP (State Department 1997, 1998).<sup>14</sup>

The analysis of foreign assistance clearly shows that the USA in the 1990s was confronted with the dilemma of geostrategic interests vs. democracy/human rights. However, this had nothing to do with the rise to power of the RP. The US Congress had already made the disbursement of foreign assistance (that is to say ODA, military aid, etc.) to Turkey subject to certain conditions in the mid-1990s following serious violations of human rights. In other words, the assistance had been approved, but part of its disbursement was dependent on progress with democratization and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border (Callaway/Matthews 2008: 148f). State Secretary Madeleine Albright, on the other hand, favoured unconditional foreign assistance for Turkey for reasons of national security, irrespective of the political colour of the potentates in Ankara (Albright 1997). In fact, the conditioning of payments caused disgruntlement in the bilateral relations: Almost all the Turkish parties were critical because it affected Turkey’s own national security interests in the fight against the PKK. As a sign of protest, Ankara refrained from claiming the funding in 1994, 1996 and 1997 (Table 1).

In summary, it can be said that the USA had an ambiguous perception of the RP, but nevertheless supported the “soft coup”. From the US point of view, Prime Minister Erbakan and his RP, which the USA considered to be Islamist, had jeopardized the domestic stability of Turkey, had fuelled anti-Americanism and strengthened “rogue states” (Isyar 2005: 40; Lombardi 1997). It is striking that the conditioning of ODA by Congress in the mid-1990s did not have any negative effects on NED funding to civil society projects and organizations. On the contrary: The NED in fact considerably increased its annual funds for Turkey during the period of office of the RP, that is to say, between 1995 and 1998; funding dropped again later (Table 3). Funding was granted in particular to projects involving human rights, gender issues in Islam, more effective local government, and political participation (NED Annual Reports 1995-1998).

### 3.3 German Perceptions and Reactions

Erbakan’s election as Prime Minister was also received guardedly in Germany. The policy of the Federal Foreign Office was to “wait and see”. Erbakan was considered a well-known political figure who had “belonged to the political establishment for over thirty years” and knew very well “what the West expected of Turkey”.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Erbakan’s policies and rhetoric fuelled apprehension in Germany and contradictory perceptions. Members of the Conservative-Liberal coalition government declared, on the one hand, that “one would have to be careful not to be taken by surprise by developments in Turkey in the same way as by the Islamic Revolu-

14 Interview with US officials in Ankara.

15 “Ganz gelassen wartet Bonn erst ein bisschen ab – Deutsche Politik will den neuen türkischen Regierungschef Erbakan nicht zuletzt am Verhältnis zu den Kurden messen”, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 9.7.1996.

tion in Iran at the end of the 1970s".<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Liberal Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel (FDP) saw no reason not to trust Prime Minister Erbakan because he had not suspended either his country's NATO membership or the Customs Union with the European Union. Kinkel regarded the "normalization" of Turkey's relations with its Islamic neighbours (including Iran) as strengthening the stability of the entire region.<sup>17</sup>

In March 1997, however, a row broke out in the bilateral relations. At the time, certain Christian-Democratic European heads of government, including Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU), declared that Turkey was not a candidate for accession to the EU because it was an "Islamic" country.<sup>18</sup> This blatantly negative culturalist attitude not only provoked anti-German and anti-European sentiments in Turkey, it also undermined German credibility there as well as German criticism of the precarious human rights situation (Anderson 2004: 318f). Furthermore, it prompted a row between the USA and Germany. Washington saw its security interests in Eastern Europe at risk because Turkey threatened to block NATO enlargement until it was officially nominated as a candidate for EU accession (Riemer 2006).

It is interesting to note Germany's reaction to the "soft coup" and to Erbakan's resignation: Both were officially acknowledged, but unofficially the mood in the Federal Government and the Bundestag was largely one of great relief.<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister Erbakan had become a strain on bilateral relations with his anti-European and anti-German sentiments. Contrary to all his election campaign promises, he had not dealt seriously with the "Kurdish question" or the issue of human rights and had thereby not only snubbed German politicians, but also disregarded Germany's interest in upholding domestic peace in Germany (Kramer 1998).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Erbakan's politicized Islam threatened to spill over to the Turkish diaspora via networks, business contacts and migration. The events in Turkey raised awareness in German domestic and legal policy – legal measures were introduced against organizations with close ties to the RP and other (Turkish) Islamist organizations in Germany (Schiffauer 2000). Secular German-Turkish advocacy groups and media played an important role in influencing German policy and justice.<sup>21</sup> Germany issued a joint statement with the European Union on the ban on the RP. The ban on the party was "noted with regret" and at the same time Turkey was called upon to respect democratic pluralism and freedom of expression in the future (AA 1998).

A summary analysis of reactions in the field of development cooperation shows that German ODA commitments to Turkey tripled during the period of the RP (1995-1997) (Table 1). Although Germany did call the Turkish government's attention to questions of democracy and

16 "Der neue Mann in Ankara stört Bonns Gelassenheit nun doch ein wenig – Die Abkommen der türkischen Regierung mit ihren Nachbarn wecken Sorge deutscher Politiker", in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 16.8.1996.

17 "Kinkel: Keine Hysterie", in: taz, 17.8.1997.

18 "Ankara besteht auf Perspektive eines EU-Beitritts", in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 6.3.1997.

19 Interview with Member of Parliament (MP) Uta Zapf (SPD) and representatives of the Federal Government.

20 "Schrille Töne aus Ankara – Erbakan verweigert Bonner Abgeordneten Dialog über Menschenrechte", in: Die Welt, 29.11.1996; Interview with MP Uta Zapf (SPD).

21 Interview with the Turkish Community in Germany (TGD).



human rights, unlike the USA it did not make the disbursement of ODA conditional on compliance in this area. The Christian-Social Minister for Development Cooperation at the time, Carl-Dieter Spranger (CSU), had already advocated waiving such requirements in the national interest in 1993 and did not regard this as a contradiction in terms: "Furthermore it is very important for us that Turkey remains stable and is not endangered by Islamic fundamentalism. We also have to take domestic issues into consideration. There are almost two million Turks living in Germany. We therefore want to keep the relationship between the two countries as harmonious as possible."<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the BMZ increased its commitments to projects related to Turkey and conducted by the foundations: Funding for these projects had amounted to approximately 3.7 million EUR between 1990 and 1994, but rose to approximately 9.8 million EUR between 1995 and 1998 (Table 4). The projects involved both the public sector and civil society, including i.a. human rights, equal opportunities, communal self-administration, environmental protection, rule of law and entrepreneurship.<sup>23</sup>

## **4. How the USA and Germany dealt with the Justice and Development Party (AKP)**

### **4.1 Turkey on its way into the "post-Kemalist" era? The assumption of office, policies and impact of the AKP**

The AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) was founded in summer 2001 following the ban on the RP and its short-lived successor, the opposition Virtue Party (FP, Fazilet Partisi). It emerged as a result of a split in Erbakan's "National Outlook" movement. The traditionalist camp close to Erbakan gathered in the Felicity Party (SP, Saadet Partisi), whereas the reformists under the leadership of the current Turkish President, Abdullah Gül, and the current Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, gathered in the AKP. Both men had criticized Erbakan's authoritarian style of leadership and the failures of the RP during its period in office, as well as the Islamist rhetoric that had provoked the ban on the party (Dagi 2008; Yavuz 2003). This change in ideology is reflected in the 2002 party programme in which the AKP committed itself to promoting democracy and human rights, and respected the principles of Kemalism. The most important point in the party programme (and also where it differed most from the RP) was the clear affirmation of belonging to the western world: EU accession was a priority goal; NATO and the USA were described as important partners. This ideological transformation was described by Stephen Kinzer (2003: 11) as "the most astonishing political revolution" in the Middle East.

22 "Ich halte am Kriterium Menschenrechte fest – Minister Carl-Dieter Spranger über die Bedingungen deutscher Entwicklungshilfe", in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 11.6.1993.

23 Interviews with the foundations.

Just one year after its foundation, the AKP won the parliamentary elections in November 2002, taking 34% of the vote – the rival Erbakan SP only gained 2.5%. On the whole, the AKP not only profited from votes from the Islamic milieu but also from the lack of political alternatives, from protest voters in a difficult financial crisis (spring 2001) and – disproportionately – from the 10% electoral threshold. Although it won just one third of the vote, it gained almost two thirds of the parliamentary seats. The AKP, which had presented itself as a conservative-reformist, market-liberal and pro-European coalition movement, was also able to win the vote of supporters of EU accession, liberals, industry as well as the backing of Alevi and Kurdish voters (Özel 2003; Dagi 2008). The AKP was subsequently able to improve on its initial election results, gaining 46% of the vote in the snap elections in July 2007 and over 49% in June 2011.

The successes of the AKP, which has been the sole ruling party since 2002, include its policy of democratization to meet the “Copenhagen Criteria” (i.a. the abolition of the death penalty, strengthening the equality of men and women before the law, the liberalization of criminal law) – this enabled the start of negotiations on EU accession – as well as its economic policy: The privatization of state enterprises and the further opening of the Turkish market for foreign investments presented Turkey with longest economic boom in its history between 2002 and the beginning of the international financial crisis (2008). The average annual per capita income trebled to over 10,000 USD. In addition, the Erdogan government reformed the pension insurance scheme and introduced an unemployment insurance fund and statutory health insurance – the latter has met with a particularly positive response from poorer sections of the population.

Despite or because of the achievements of the new Islamic elites in the AKP, a cultural and power struggle has broken out in recent years with the old, secular-Kemalist state elites over the “true” republic. The row involves three areas of tension:

*a) The “Islamization” of State and Society*

The Kemalists’ criticism refers to the one-party dominance of the AKP and the appointment of AKP politicians and sympathizers to key positions in the state (ministries, justice authorities, military, police, etc.). But other factors which fuel fears of Islamization include the return of religion to the public sphere, the expansion of state Koran schools, the (meanwhile withdrawn) bill to punish adultery, the restrictions on serving alcohol in communities governed by the AKP – officially for health reasons – and the (so far unsuccessful) proposal put forward at local level in some communities to divide public parks and beaches into separate areas for men and women according to Islamic criteria (Karakas 2007). These fears together with the concern of the Kemalist state elite about the potential loss of their decades-old prerogative over state resources prompted the National Security Council to threaten to stage a coup in protest against Abdullah Gül’s presidential candidature in April 2007 and the snap elections in July 2007 (Shankland 2007). Following Gül’s election as President by parliament in August 2007, the AKP, unlike the RP in its day, now holds the two highest state offices. Claims about Islamization have become more virulent. The AKP’s attempt to break up the Kemalists’ monopoly on the interpretation of religious symbols and to lift the ban on headscarves through a change in the constitution in spring 2008 resulted in proceedings to ban the party (meanwhile discontinued) (Karakas 2008). The AKP government was able to generally lift the ban on students wearing headscarves in the course of the referendum on constitutional reform of September 2010

and the decision of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK); it continues to apply to public service employees, however.<sup>24</sup>

*b) Increasing Authoritarianism and Safeguarding Own Power*

The process of EU accession under the AKP government has only led to a modest erosion of the Kemalist principles of nationalism and republicanism. Although the cultural rights of the Kurds have been strengthened – the Kurdish language may now be used in the media and in election campaigns and Kurdish may be taught in private schools – further steps towards liberalization in the “Kurdish question” were prevented after 2009 following massive public resistance from nationalist groupings, diverse attacks by the Kurdish PKK and the fuelling of fears about Turkey’s territorial disintegration. Furthermore, in its progress report of 2010, the EU Commission criticized the slight progress made in the field of religious freedom, particularly with regard to the Christian and Alevi minorities, as well as the increasing restrictions on press freedom and freedom of expression (EU Commission 2010). These restrictions such as Internet censorship (e.g. the long ban on “Youtube” on account of “anti-Islamic propaganda” and insulting Atatürk) or the legal dispute with the AKP-critical Dogan Media Group are a manifestation of the increasing authoritarianism of the Erdogan government.<sup>25</sup> This authoritarianism was also evident during the “Ergenekon” investigations which have been continuing since summer 2008. With the initial support of the National Security Council, the case involved the arrest of several hundred people, including retired generals as well as nationalist and pro-Kemalist politicians and journalists on suspicion of plotting a coup against the AKP government. The government exerted a direct influence on the investigations of the judiciary as well as on public prosecutors and police officers with allegiances to the AKP, and took advantage of the arrests to discredit unwelcome critics (Jenkins 2009).

Also problematic is the decision taken by the Erdogan government in the course of the constitutional reform of September 2010 to extend the influence of the executive on the judiciary<sup>26</sup> and, contrary to its promise, not to lower the 10% electoral threshold – officially to maintain political stability and prevent a fragmentation of the party landscape, but in fact most likely as a calculated measure to profit from this threshold in the 2011 parliamentary elections and later. As these examples demonstrate, it is ironically the flaws in the Kemalist system (10% threshold, Paragraph 301, insufficient separation of powers) which promote the authoritarianism of the AKP government and safeguard its power.

*c) Foreign Policy “Turning away from the West”*

The AKP government’s foreign policy doctrine (“Strategic Depth”) proposes an active foreign policy with the aim of “zero problems” with neighbouring states. Turkey is to grow into the

24 “Quiet End to Turkey’s College Headscarf Ban”, in: BBC News Europe, 31.12.2010.

25 “Dogan v Erdogan: Turkey’s biggest media group gets a colossal tax fine”, in: The Economist, 10.9.2009.

26 The constitutional reform foresees that the State President will in future be able to choose 16 of the 19 members of the Constitutional Court, seven of whom he will be able to nominate directly according to his personal discretion.

role of a regional peacekeeping power and “honest broker” (Davutoglu 2005). This policy led i.a. to the expansion of relations with Greece, Armenia and Iraq; and Ankara also intervened to mediate in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian conflicts. However, the new foreign policy also means that NATO partner Turkey is increasingly pursuing its own national economic and security interests. For example, in spring 2003, the AKP-dominated Turkish parliament – with the support of the opposition Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) – refused to allow US troops to invade Iraq from Turkish territory because the Iraq mission was not legitimated by international law. In the event of a war, the Erdogan government feared the collapse of foreign trade with Iraq and other neighbours in the Middle East. At the same time, the Erdogan government has been expanding its relations with Russia, Iran and Syria. Once again, an extensive gas agreement was signed with Iran in summer 2007. Measures such as Turkey’s drastic criticism of Israel and its Middle East policy; Ankara’s tactical manoeuvring over the candidacy of the Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen for the post of NATO Secretary-General (due to his “anti-Islamic” attitude regarding the “Mohammed caricatures”); or the Brazilian-Turkish “No” to UN sanctions against Iran’s nuclear programme in summer 2010 are all intended to emphasize Turkey’s new self-confidence – rooted also in the rapid growth of the Turkish economy – and its position as the *leading nation* in the Islamic world.<sup>27</sup>

## 4.2 US-American perceptions and reactions

The AKP’s election victory was received guardedly in the USA: “Let us at this point congratulate the Justice and Development Party on its electoral success in yesterday’s parliamentary elections. We also congratulate the Turkish people in demonstrating through their conduct of the election the vibrancy of Turkey’s democracy” (State Department 2002). It is not clear in how far this message of congratulation was intended honestly or ironically. The designated Head of the National Security Council, General Hilmi Özkök, was received by Foreign Secretary Powell in Washington only a few days after the election. Officially the trip was described as an inaugural visit, but the future Turkish domestic and foreign policy of the sole-ruling AKP was also an issue at the talks (Kapsis 2006: 41f).

In December 2002, however, President Bush received AKP leader Erdogan – contrary to protocol rules – almost like a head of state (White House 2002). Erdogan had spent four months in prison in 1999 charged with “inciting hatred based on religious differences” and was only able to become Prime Minister in March 2003 following a necessary by-election. President Bush is reported to have said to Erdogan: “You believe in the Almighty, and I believe in the Almighty. That’s why we’ll be great partners.”<sup>28</sup> A year after the attacks of 11 September 2001, the USA was demonstrating a pragmatic attitude towards the AKP, based on the following

27 “The Davutoglu Effect - All Change for Foreign Policy”, in: The Economist, 23.10.2010.

28 Quoted from “The Erdogan Experiment”, in: The New York Times, 11.5.2003.

calculations: President Bush wanted to “buy” the support of the AKP government for the forthcoming war against Iraq by upgrading Erdogan, praising Turkey *and* the AKP as “models” for the Muslim world and promising to support the beginning of negotiations on Turkey’s EU accession at the forthcoming EU summit in Copenhagen (Kapsis 2006).

This is consistent with the massive increase in ODA commitments via supplemental payments of 200 million USD from the “Economic Support Fund” for the financial year 2003 and of 1 billion USD for 2004 (Table 1). The reason was stated as follows: “Turkey is a front-line state and one of our most important allies. Its strategic location in the nexus of Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Caspian, coupled with its unique status as the only predominantly Muslim NATO member, make it an active and extremely valuable partner” (CBJ 2003). The funds were to compensate for financial losses which Turkey would suffer in the fight against international terrorism and to secure further support from Ankara (CBJ 2004). Although the funds were not made conditional on issues of democracy and human rights as had been the case in the 1990s, the special payment of 1 billion USD was not effected in 2003 (Table 1). One of the reasons was that the Turkish parliament had voted against US troops invading Iraq from south-eastern Anatolian territory in March 2003 and had merely granted overflight rights. The AKP government had previously signalled to Washington that it would try to win support for the US mission and would gain the necessary majority. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, on the other hand, spoke of a breach of confidence on the part of the AKP government, criticized parliament’s decision and revealed a bizarre understanding of democracy: “I think we had a big disappointment. [...] I think particularly the military. I think for whatever reason they did not play the strong leadership role on that issue that we would have expected.” In Wolfowitz’s view, the Turkish military should have made a more vehement effort to “persuade” parliament to support the USA more actively. Only by doing so could Ankara be involved from the very start in peacebuilding in Iraq and in rebuilding the country (Wolfowitz 2003).<sup>29</sup>

Foreign assistance continued despite this disappointment over the Turkish parliament’s decision on Iraq and despite AKP-critical opinion in Congress. In autumn 2003, the Bush administration granted Turkey a low-interest loan of 8.5 billion USD to help it to further stabilize its economy following the strong turbulences of spring 2001 (Momani 2006/07). Furthermore, the USA had already increased its foreign assistance in 2002 – irrespective of the AKP’s accession to government – and continued to do so in the following years (CBJ 2002-2011). The USA demonstrated flexibility and pragmatism in order to safeguard its own geostrategic interests. These included i.a. ensuring supplies to its own troops and stabilizing post-war Iraq from the Incirlik military base; the further involvement of Muslim Turkey in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan; supporting Ankara in the fight against Islamist and Kurdish terrorism *in* Turkey; the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East; and curbing supplies of drugs from Afghanistan and flows of refugees from Iraq’s border areas (CBJ 2003-2011). The USA’s commitment paid off: With Washington’s mediation, NATO partners Turkey and

29 Cf. also “Will Turkey Pay for its Defiance?” in: The New York Times, 9.3.2003.

Greece promised to solve their border disputes in the Aegis by civil means; moreover the AKP government agreed to the reunification of Cyprus in spring 2004 – from the US point of view, both steps were important for NATO's trouble-free interoperability; furthermore Ankara once again took over the leadership of ISAF in Afghanistan. President Bush was also impressed by the Erdogan government's policy of democratization to meet the "Copenhagen Criteria", which – with Washington's support – led to the beginning of negotiations on EU accession in October 2005.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of a joint declaration in summer 2006 agreeing to expand the "strategic partnership", relations deteriorated dramatically with effect from autumn 2006. Following a series of terrorist attacks by splinter groups of the Kurdish PKK operating from the Iraqi border region, the USA refused to allow Turkey to invade northern Iraq because it did not want its own stability interests to be jeopardized. This refusal had the unintended consequence of further fuelling anti-American sentiment in Turkey, which had been growing since the Iraq War and which insinuates that the USA has an interest in an independent "Kurdistan" (Barkey 2009; Taspinar 2005).

Another problem from the US point of view was the power struggle between the AKP government and the Turkish military.<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note the official US reactions. The State Department commented on the threatened coup as follows: "We have real confidence in Turkey's democracy and we have confidence in their constitutional processes. [...] We are encouraging *everybody* to participate in Turkey's democracy according to *their* constitution and laws" [author's emphasis] (State Department 2007c). The renewed AKP election victory in summer 2007 and Gül's election as State President were commented on with reserve (State Department 2007a, 2007b). With regard to the proceedings to ban the AKP, State Secretary Rice hoped for a solution along the lines of the still valid, semi-authoritarian Turkish constitution and its *Kemalist* (i.e. not liberal-democratic) reasons of state, which had been formulated under the supervision of the military following the 1980 coup: "We believe and hope that this will be decided *within Turkey's* democratic context and by its *secular* democratic principles" [author's emphasis] (State Department 2008b). The State Department thus confirmed the (controversial) superordinate role of the Turkish military as a political corrective<sup>32</sup> and the principle of secularism as the antipode to the policies and rhetoric of the AKP. Washington therefore also commented on the suspension of proceedings to ban the AKP with reserve (State Department 2008a).

30 "US Praises AKP Role in Turkey's Democratization", in: Turkish Daily News, 11.11.2005.

31 "Troubles Ahead", in: The Economist, 19.10.2006.

32 Article 118 of the Turkish constitution refers to the role of the National Security Council as follows: "The Council of Ministers shall evaluate decisions of the National Security Council concerning the measures that it deems necessary for the preservation of the existence and independence of the state, the integrity and indivisibility of the country and the peace and security of society." It is legally disputed in how far this constitutes a right on the part of the National Security Council to "intervene" in Turkish politics. The military itself appeals in particular to Articles 35 and 85 of its "Internal Rules of Conduct" (for example during the 1980 coup). According to these, it is obliged to protect the principles of the republic in accordance with the Constitution and to defend it against internal as well as external dangers, if necessary using force. Cf. Jung 2001.

The US perception of the AKP as a danger to the secular foundation of Turkey was not only nourished by the image of a “non-secular party” within an “Islamist framework” and the politicization of the headscarf issue – this was claimed among other things to have led to an increase in “neighborhood pressure” and in the meantime there were said to be many (involuntary) headscarf wearers at universities and in ministries – but was also endorsed by the AKP’s “Islamic” foreign policy.<sup>33</sup> From the point of view of the Bush administration, Erdogan had not only gone behind the USA’s back with regard to the Iraq mission, he was also increasingly casting doubt on Turkey’s ISAF contribution in Afghanistan, criticizing Israel’s Middle East policy (following the failure of Ankara’s efforts to mediate) and pushing ahead with the expansion of relations with Russia and the “rogue states” of Syria and Iran. The USA considered the conclusion of a new Turkish-Iranian gas agreement in summer 2007 to be a particular affront because it strengthened the Mullah regime and, just as evidently, weakened the USA’s influence on Turkey. After all, the Clinton administration had initiated the construction of the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan pipeline in 1999 not only to make the USA less dependent on Arab and Russian oil, but also to make Turkey less dependent on resources from Russia and in particular from Iran (and correspondingly once again “more dependent” on the USA).

Nevertheless, it is striking that despite the tense relationship with the AKP government, both the Bush administration (autumn 2007) and the Obama administration (spring 2010) – like their predecessors – distanced themselves from Congress resolutions on “recognizing Turkish genocide against the Armenians”, which were initiated primarily by Armenian and Greek advocacy groups. In both cases, Washington justified its stance by referring to geostrategic interests: Ankara had threatened to freeze military cooperation – this would have had serious consequences for supplies to US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq (Giragosian 2009).<sup>34</sup>

A new note was struck at the beginning of 2008 when the AKP government, with the support of the Turkish military, demonstrated “coercive behaviour” and threatened to invade northern Iraq to fight the Kurdish PKK, if necessary without support from Washington. Following claims of “double standards”, namely that the USA took its own interests in the fight against international terrorism more seriously than the Turkish struggle against Kurdish terrorism, President Bush backed down and supported Turkey by providing intelligence information so that the military operation could be completed more quickly (Barkey 2009). In parallel to the disgruntlement regarding foreign policy, there was also growing US criticism of Turkish domestic policy. The USA regarded the stagnation of the process of democratization and the increasing authoritarianism of the AKP as evidence of the latter’s covert policy of Islamization. Accordingly, the USA called for more rule of law, freedom of expression and press freedom, religious freedom for Christians and Alevis, as well as cultural rights for Kurds in its various

33 Interview with US officials in Ankara.

34 Also interesting in this context is the fact that the row between the AKP government and the Israeli leadership caused the majority of the pro-Turkish Jewish advocacy groups (established after the initiation of the strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel in the mid-1990s) to largely withdraw their support for Ankara over the Armenia resolutions. Cf. “Turkey Criticizes House Committee Vote on Armenian Killings”, in: *The New York Times*, 5.3.2010.

reports on democracy and human rights (State Department 2005-2010). From the AKP's point of view, however, these reports failed to mention the problems of the lack of religious freedom for Muslims in Kemalist Turkey.<sup>35</sup>

US-Turkish relations only improved slightly under President Obama, even though he did speak of opening a new chapter in bilateral relations in his speech before the Turkish parliament in April 2009 (White House 2009). The transatlantic rift is still deep although the Obama administration was able to achieve Turkish-Armenian rapprochement under the patronage of State Secretary Hillary Clinton in autumn 2009. The administration was disappointed by Ankara's "coercive" tactics in the context of Rasmussen's election as new NATO Secretary-General and "alarmed" about the Turkish government's "hysterical" reaction to the "Gaza flotilla" incident, which Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu – without a hint of irony – described as Turkey's own "September 11 experience". The Brazilian-Turkish rejection of UN sanctions against Iran also caused considerable irritation and Washington cancelled a number of high-level meetings in the period that followed, for example meetings on combating terrorism.<sup>36</sup> US Defense Secretary Robert Gates saw an important reason for the new Turkish foreign policy in the culturalist politicization of EU admission and thus indirectly gave Germany some of the blame for Turkey's "turning away from the West".<sup>37</sup> The White House only issued guarded statements regarding the constitutional reforms of September 2010, whereby President Barack Obama diplomatically and ambiguously praised the "vibrancy" of Turkish democracy (White House 2010).

In how far did the deterioration of US American-Turkish relations affect development cooperation? Table 1 shows that the USA continued its ODA disbursements, despite all its criticism of the AKP government. This funding amounted to over 259 million USD in the period during which the AKP was in power, i.e. between 2002 and 2009, compared with 170 million USD during the previous eight-year reference period from 1994 to 2001. A change can therefore be noted; especially as US development assistance to Turkey was scheduled to expire at the end of the 1990s due to Turkey's positive socioeconomic development. The new commitments were justified i.a. as follows: "Turkey is a front-line state, a key ally in the war on terrorism [...]. Its success as a democratic, open-economy Muslim state rooted in the West is important to U.S. efforts at political and economic reform in the Middle East and Eurasia" (CBJ 2007). The US funds were transferred to the AKP government with the aim of expanding border controls in the Caucasus and along the borders with Iran and Iraq to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as to finance part of Turkey's ISAF mission (CBJ 2007-2008). Furthermore, funds were also granted from the "Economic Support Fund" between 2006 and 2008 to foster the socioeconomic development of the Kurdish south-east of Turkey, where above-average levels of poverty and unemployment had encouraged instability (i.e. terrorism). The US assistance was intended to contribute to Turkey's internal stability and accel-

35 Interview with an official of the AKP.

36 Interview with US officials in Ankara.

37 "US Defence Secretary Gates Blames EU for Turkey 'Drift'", in: BBC News Europe, 9.6.2010.



erate EU accession (CBJ 2008). US assistance in the 2009 financial year was justified i.a. with Turkey's role as a "model": "Turkey can play a leadership role in the region and has served as a model for modernizing nations worldwide" (CBJ 2009).

In addition to development assistance, the State Department also provided funding of almost 39 million USD between 2002 and 2009 for "non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, combating problems of refugees" and of 26.7 million USD for the IMET programme to train foreign officers. Here too, one can note a clear increase in funding compared with the reference period 1994 to 2001 (US Overseas 2011; CBJ 2011). The increase in IMET funding should be considered more closely. Whereas the justification for the funding in the financial year 2003 was still: "IMET training will [...] teach fundamental democratic principles which help strengthen Turkey's commitment to democracy and human rights" (CBJ 2003), the justification for the funding from 2004 to 2007 merely stated that the USA was interested in a "well trained, *U.S.-oriented* Turkish officer corps" [author's emphasis]. There was no longer any mention of democracy and human rights (CBJ 2004-2007). The US focus on the Turkish military was also emphasized in the following years (CBJ 2008-2011). The increase in IMET funds since 2002 reflects not only Turkey's stronger military involvement (e.g. via ISAF), but also US concern about the Islamization of the military and its estrangement from the USA and indicates that Washington supports a Kemalist "counter-balance" to the AKP.<sup>38</sup>

The "Government & Civil Society" heading in the OECD data base provides a more precise insight into US disbursements in support of democratization projects. These amounted to approximately 9.6 million USD between 2005 and 2009 (Table 2). The analysis shows that this US assistance was also intended to act as a counter-balance; that is to say, that it did not benefit the pro-government public sector, but primarily civil society, i.e. the "opponents" of the single-party rule of the AKP. In concrete terms: of the total of 9.6 million USD provided between 2005 and 2009, approximately 2.4 million USD, that is to say 25%, went to the public sector (primarily to the field of "Public Sector Policy & Administration Management") and 4.2 million USD, approximately 44%, to civil society, primarily to the fields of "Democratic Participation and Civil Society" and "Elections" (Table 2, author's own calculations; cf. also OECD 2011).

The NED also increased its assistance to Turkey and, with funds totalling 10.4 million USD for the period 2002 to 2009, more than doubled its funding compared with the period 1994 to 2001. The IRI and NDI foundations have adapted their programmes since the mid-2000s – their focus is now increasingly on promoting political participation and strengthening the legislative as the control organ of the executive (NED 2011). It should be noted that the Republican IRI foundation initially rated the AKP as "Islamist" but later rated it more moderately as a "center-right party with Islamic roots" (IRI 2002: 15f; IRI Homepage 2009). In the period under study, although the IRI did have isolated contacts with the AKP, it refused to cooperate with the AKP or civil society organizations affiliated to the AKP on an institutionalized basis and preferred to cooperate with secular parties and organizations. The Democratic NDI foun-

<sup>38</sup> Interview with US officials in Ankara.

dation, on the other hand, also worked with the AKP and civil society organizations affiliated to the AKP, whereby the guiding principle was to exert influence through cooperation. Among other things, the NDI funded topics such as gender, local governance and citizen participation (NDI 2005: 25).<sup>39</sup>

### **4.3 German perceptions and reactions**

The AKP's election victory in November 2002 was also received guardedly in Berlin. The Red-Green coalition government hoped that the new leadership would pursue a pro-European course and introduce more democracy. "Initial signals" were "noted favourably"; however, it was necessary to await the formation of a government and a government programme.<sup>40</sup> A row over Germany's policy towards Turkey flared up in December 2002 when the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) debated the start of negotiations on Turkey's accession to the EU. The government and the opposition agreed in their view of the AKP – but with different implications for Turkish accession. Social-Democrat Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) supported the prospect of EU membership for Ankara: "There should be a consensus that we have a great, common – let me say a national – German interest in supporting those forces in Turkey which want a secularized Turkey as favoured by Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish state, and are responsible for ensuring that Turkey does not fall into fundamentalism. It is also undisputed that we have a national interest in ensuring that Turkey should experience ever closer ties with the West" (Schröder 2002). Christian-Democrat opposition leader Angela Merkel (CDU) employed similar arguments a week later, but drew the opposite conclusion: "It is also true that we cannot simply ignore the political order in Turkey, which until today is based on an important role of the military in order to ensure that the separation of religion and state is at all possible. This is absolutely contrary to the rule of law of the Member States of the European Union. It is also true that a political leader like Mr. Erbakan [author's note: she was obviously referring to Erdogan] is now guiding Turkey along exciting and interesting paths, whereby we do not know to what political order this will one day lead. We therefore plead in favour of focusing first of all on consolidating the European Union and awaiting developments in Turkey" (Merkel 2002).

However, the AKP government surprised Germany with its (EU) policy of reform and democratization, which Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of the Green Party (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN) regarded as having a "model" character for other Muslim states. This effected a change of perception: "The Erdogan government, which was originally regarded with much scepticism, has introduced more reforms over the last eighteen months than have been introduced during the last decades. One must recognize this fact even though there is still a lot to do" (Fischer 2003). The Federal Foreign Office addressed what was meant by "there is still a lot to do" in its reports on human rights. It called i.a. for more civil rights, the separation of power,

39 Interviews with the IRI and NDI foundations.

40 "Reaktionen nach politischer Wende in der Türkei bleiben zurückhaltend", in: Berliner Morgenpost, 5.11.2002.

freedom of expression and press freedom, and minority rights for Christians and Kurds (AA 2008b; 2005). Foreign Minister Fischer's claim that the Kemalist state ideology and political parties had hardly contributed to the democratization of the country "during the last decades" marked a new tone. This change of paradigm or change of perception had already been evident in the "Country Concept" (Länderkonzept) on Turkey of the German Development Ministry (BMZ) that had been under SPD-leadership since 1998. This "Country Concept" not only no longer expounded the problems of the "re-Islamization tendencies" of previous years, but also described Kemalism as a central obstacle to democratization. Kemalism was regarded as being "in need of reform", and the status of the Turkish military was rated as "not being compatible with the European understanding of democracy" (BMZ 2000: 5).

Tensions arose in the bilateral relations when the issue of Turkey's EU accession was instrumentalized during the federal election campaign (2005) and Merkel became Chancellor of a grand Christian-Democrat and Social-Democrat coalition in autumn 2005. Although all parties in Germany have an interest in a democratic Turkey, from the point of view of the CDU/CSU this does not necessary imply full EU membership. Merkel is in favour of "open-ended" negotiations, whereas the majority of members of the Christian-Democrat parties (and individual politicians from other parties) favour a "Privileged Partnership" for geographical, financial and above all cultural reasons (Karakas 2006). However, this insistence on the cultural-religious dichotomy – on the one hand, the "Christian occident" and on the other hand, "oriental Muslim Turkey" – is all the more surprising when one considers that, at a programmatic level, the AKP demonstrates the greatest proximity to the CDU/CSU of all parties and has for several years enjoyed an observer status in the European People's Party (EPP), the umbrella organization of Christian Democratic and Conservative parties in Europe. As a result, there are close relations between the Christian-Democrat Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the AKP and its affiliated organizations.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the German perception of the AKP was more positive than that of the RP had been – thanks to the AKP's more moderate policies, its policy of reform and the activities of AKP advocacy groups in the German diaspora. Germany also showed greater conflict sensitivity, as is demonstrated by its reaction to the inner-Turkish power struggle. For example, the Social-Democrat-led Foreign Office criticized the threat of a coup against the AKP government (AA 2007c) and welcomed the AKP's election victory in summer 2007: "The Turkish people have clearly expressed their confidence in the government of Prime Minister Erdogan in democratic elections. On this basis, the Turkish government now has a strong mandate to continue a policy of stability and reform" (AA 2007b; cf. also Bundeskanzleramt 2007b). Gül's election as President was also welcomed by both Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) (AA 2007a; Bundeskanzleramt 2007a). The procedure to ban the AKP, on the other hand, was noted by the Federal Government with "incomprehension" because the AKP "had commit-

41 Cf. the website of the KAS in Turkey. For information regarding the EPP, cf.: [www.epp.eu](http://www.epp.eu) (15.10.2011).

ted itself to the principles of democracy and rule of law" (AA 2008c). Both the Federal Government and the EU welcomed the suspension of proceedings to ban the AKP.<sup>42</sup>

The German side also adopted a positive attitude towards Turkey's rapid economic development under the AKP government. After all, this successful economic policy not only encouraged positive socioeconomic development, which mitigated German fears of poverty-induced Turkish-Kurdish immigration, it also benefited Germany as an important trading partner. The almost 4,000 German entrepreneurs in Turkey regard the country as an increasingly attractive market and location for investments as well as an economic bridge linking the Middle East, the Black Sea region and the Central Asian Turk republics.<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, German-Turkish relations became tense in the second half of 2007. Apart from the AKP's increasingly authoritarian domestic policy, the Federal Government criticized the following: the Turkish gas deal with Iran, claiming that Ankara had initiated the "unauthorized" involvement of Teheran in the trans-European Nabucco pipeline;<sup>44</sup> the speech by Prime Minister Erdogan in Cologne in early 2008, when he recommended that migrants of Turkish origin should not allow themselves to be "assimilated" by the German society; the intervention in northern Iraq to combat the PKK, for fear that inner-Turkish conflicts could once again spill over into Germany; and the scandal over donations to "Deniz Feneri", an aid organization affiliated to the AKP, which was claimed to have collected more than 40 million EUR from migrants of Turkish origin in Germany between 2002 and 2007 and embezzled a large part of these funds.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Steinmeier took a positive view of the growing self-assurance of Turkish foreign policy and noted that Turkey had "gained considerable international recognition and respect with its conciliatory and constructive foreign policy" (AA 2009). The Conservative-Liberal coalition government, which came to power in autumn 2009, on the other hand, saw Turkey's foreign policy as Janus-faced. Berlin "prefers to see Turkey in a leading position in the Middle East than Iran", but Prime Minister Erdogan's attacks on Israel were regarded "very critically". The instrumentalization of Rasmussen's candidacy for the office of NATO Secretary-General marked an "unexpected and new tone" and the Brazilian-Turkish "No" to the Iran sanctions "shocked" Chancellor Merkel.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, however, Liberal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (FDP) praised the latest constitutional reforms, although he did remark prophetically that the "concrete shaping of the balance of power in the state is certainly not yet complete" (AA 2010).

What were the reactions in the context of German development cooperation? Berlin's ODA disbursements continued largely unaffected despite the scepticism towards the AKP govern-

42 "Die AKP wird nicht aufgelöst", in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 31.7.2008.

43 Interview with the German-Turkish Chamber of Industry and Commerce (DTR-IHK).

44 "Iranisches Erdgas für die Türkei. Wirtschaftliche Notwendigkeit mit politischen Hintergedanken", in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 28.9.2007.

45 "Spendenbetrug für die islamische Sache", in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 18.9.2008.

46 Interview with representatives of the Federal Government.

ment. Germany remained an important donor country for Turkey during the 2000s with ODA disbursements of approximately 966 million USD (Table 1) during the period of office of the AKP under review, i.e. between 2002 and 2009. Apart from these direct payments, Turkey is also receiving funding of approximately 4.8 billion EUR from Brussels under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) for the period 2007 to 2013 (EU Commission 2011). Germany as the biggest “EU net contributor” indirectly funds almost 20% of EU pre-accession assistance.

Following the attacks of 11 September, the BMZ, in addition to its primarily development-focused work, proposed initiating an intercultural dialogue with the Islamic world to promote democracy.<sup>47</sup> This dialogue, which has been conducted in Turkey by the Political Department of the German Embassy in Ankara since the end of 2001, takes this new conflict sensitivity into account and is an interesting innovation in German-Turkish development cooperation. Measures have included, for example, offering courses for Turkish Imams being sent to Germany. These courses do not only teach the German language, but also provide instruction on the (subordinate) role of religion in a democracy and on Islamism and questions of social integration in Germany. This measure can be regarded as an indirect step to promote democracy and demonstrates the special domestic-foreign reciprocity in the countries’ bilateral relations.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the Ernst-Reuter-Initiative was also launched within the framework of the intercultural dialogue in 2006. This was the German-Turkish reply to the “Mohammed caricatures” and is intended to impart basic values such as tolerance and religious freedom through bilateral projects. In this context, one should also mention the “National Integration Summit”, which was initiated under the leadership of Interior Minister Schäuble (CDU), and the “German Islam Conference” as well as the intensification of bilateral cooperation on questions of domestic security (German Embassy Ankara 2009).<sup>49</sup>

It is surprising, however, that although the Council of Europe and individual Members of the Bundestag regularly criticized the 10% electoral threshold, neither this threshold nor the headscarf ban, the politicization of which had almost led to a ban on the AKP, were the subject of the German Reports on Human Rights or official reactions (Council of Europe 2008; AA 2005; 2008b).

A closer look at German ODA reveals that disbursements for projects in the field of “Government & Civil Society” amounted to approximately 23.8 million USD between 2005 and 2009. In contrast to the USA, the major part of German ODA (11.7 million USD or 49%) went to the public sector and 7.9 million USD (33%) to civil society (Table 2). However, it is not only “Public Sector Policy & Administration Management” that has been strengthened in recent years but

47 “Auf dem islamischen Auge blind – Deutsche Entwicklungspolitik muss umdenken/Interkultureller Dialog”, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17.11.2001.

48 Interview with the German Embassy in Ankara.

49 With regard to domestic security, one should also mention the nation-wide ban on the Turkish publishing company “Yeni Akit” and its radical Islamist newspaper “Anadolu’da Vakit” due to “systematic incitement” at the beginning of 2005. Cf. “Schily verbietet türkischen Zeitungsverlag”, in: Rheinische Post Online, 25.2.2005.

increasingly also corrective policy mechanisms such as “Democratic Participation & Civil Society”, “Justice Development” and “Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom” (OECD 2011; German Embassy Ankara 2009). Here too, one can detect greater conflict sensitivity in German development cooperation.

The work of the political foundations also deserves particular mention in this context as it caused turbulence in the bilateral relations in 2002/2003. In a nationalistically motivated court case, the Turkish judiciary accused the German foundations of spying for Germany and undermining the territorial and socio-political unity of the Turkish state. Although the charge was dropped at the end of 2003 due to lack of evidence, bureaucratic restrictions were imposed on (not only German) foundations in the subsequent period and have been making their work in the field of political capacity-building more difficult ever since.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, even though the German foundations often had to deal with mistrust on the Turkish side, they were just as active in the 2000s as in the 1990s. BMZ commitments to the foundations amounted to over 24.1 million EUR between 2002 and 2009, compared with 18.4 million EUR in the reference period 1994 to 2001 (Table 4).

A closer look shows that the foundations made some adjustments to their work during the rule of the AKP. Interestingly, the greatest variance is to be seen between the Christian Democratic Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the Liberal Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (FNF) – especially as the mother parties CDU/CSU and FDP formed the ruling coalition government in 2009. After its former Turkish partners, the DYP und ANAP, first went into opposition and then dissolved themselves in the mid-2000s, the KAS now has the closest contacts of all German foundations with the AKP and AKP-affiliated civil society organizations – due to their “shared religious-conservative value basis”. However, relations have cooled down rather in recent years, particularly because of the AKP government’s massive criticism of Israel.

The FNF rates the AKP as “Islamic-conservative” in its political-ideological orientation and therefore does not work with either the AKP or its sub-organizations either structurally or institutionally – which does not, however, “prevent individual contacts, invitations and cooperation with representatives of the AKP”. Generally, the FNF advocates a strict separation of state and religion; its work in Turkey focuses on secular partners and increasingly on projects relating to “secularism as a significant component of a liberal democratic order”.

The Social-Democratic Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Green Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (HBS) have formal contacts with the AKP. They do not directly advise the government, but there is occasional cooperation with persons and organizations affiliated to the AKP.<sup>51</sup>

50 “Kein Verfahren wegen deutscher Stiftungen”, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 31.12.2003.

51 Interviews with the foundations.

## 5. Results

The election victories of both the RP and AKP were the result and manifestation of a successful process of democratization in Turkey. Nevertheless, the transition of the democracy into a “post-Kemalist” era has proved to be both inconsistent and inconclusive, particularly under the AKP. There is no doubt that the complexity of this transformation process prevented the USA and Germany from conducting the “right” foreign and development policy when dealing with Turkey during the period under study. Both donor countries pursued different interests in their policies towards Turkey, with different implications:

The USA’s dealings with political Islam and the Kemalist state elite between 1995 and 2010 are characterized by both continuity and change. Washington initially sought non-ideological and pragmatic cooperation with the democratically elected RP and AKP governments in order to safeguard its geostrategic interests. However, the RP and AKP’s pursuit of their own interests in the fields of Turkish domestic, foreign and economic policy resulted in a row and a breach of confidence. A change of attitude on the US side is evident, however, in the continuation of foreign assistance and development cooperation. ODA did not stop at the end of the 1990s as scheduled, but was extended as a consequence of the attacks of 11 September and the Iraq War – this time, in contrast to the 1990s, without Congress imposing strict conditions regarding questions of democracy and human rights. It was important for the USA to be involved in Turkey and, above all, to cooperate with the AKP government in order to protect US national interests.

Nevertheless, US foreign assistance demonstrates a certain degree of “counterbalancing”, especially during the period of office of the AKP: The increases in IMET funding for the military and ODA for the civil-society sector are intended to strengthen the “counterweight” to the AKP government. However, claims of the “Islamization” of Turkish domestic policy, made primarily by the Bush administration, and concern about the new axis Moscow-Teheran-Ankara<sup>52</sup> fail to recognize two things: (a) For many decades, Kemalism was perceived as an administrative means of implementing an elitist civilizing process in Turkey. However, the integration of political Islam in the parliamentary system extends the social and political legitimacy of the (Kemalist) state by perceiving democracy as a participatory element to implement own interests, thus preventing a splintering or radicalization of religious groups. (b) Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has been undergoing a process of emancipation that takes into account the cross-party political desire to represent its own security and economic interests and no longer be a chess piece on the “grand chessboard” of the USA (Zbigniew Brzezinski). Larrabee (2008: vii) aptly concludes that, despite joint declarations of intent, Turkey in future will be an “increasingly less-predictable and more-difficult ally”.

Washington’s difficulties in dealing with the Islamic government parties were particularly apparent during the inner-Turkish power struggle. The USA did not only undermine the RP

52 “Russia, Turkey and Iran Meet, Posing Test for U.S.”, in: *The New York Times*, 8.6.2010.

and AKP's democratic rights of self-determination, it also discredited its own claim to being a "freedom fighter" for democracy. Against the backdrop of threatened coups and procedures to ban political parties, Washington regularly merely referred to constitutionalism, that is to say: Turkey should solve its problems within the framework of its (military) constitution. The USA thereby strengthened the omnipotent role of the Kemalist institutions and of the political veto players, namely the military and the judiciary. Turkey's much quoted "model" role for other Muslim states makes it clear that the USA is thinking primarily in terms of subordinating "people power" to authoritarian Kemalist – but secular – "state power". The USA has thus resolved the dilemma of whether Turkey is a "pivotal state" – that is to say an "instrument" to implement the USA's own geostrategic interests – or a normative "model" for the Islamic world by deciding in favour of the "pivot" (Lesser 2007: 25f). Carothers (2003: 94) rightly refers to the dangers of such a policy: "If democracy promotion is reduced to an instrumental strategy for producing political outcomes favorable to U.S. interests, the value and legitimacy of the concepts will be lost."

Germany also demonstrated both continuity and change in its dealings with political Islam and the Kemalist state elite, but differed from the USA in certain respects: The continuity refers to Germany's more positive perception of the new Turkish foreign policy that has been emerging since the first half of the 1990s and the largely unconditional granting of ODA by Berlin. This was due to the special domestic-foreign interdependency of the countries' bilateral relations; that is to say the German desire to influence the process of democratization in Turkey was closely linked to Germany's national interest in societal peace and domestic security in Germany itself.

The change on the German side refers to the different approaches and reactions to the RP and AKP respectively. Bilateral relations under Prime Minister Erbakan deteriorated dramatically; there was open confrontation. Germany's reaction to the coup threat and to Erbakan's forced resignation was therefore noticeably guarded. Although Germany criticized the ban on the RP in a joint declaration with the EU, there can on the whole be no mention of a German "value-oriented foreign policy" with regard to the RP. The German side apparently considered Erbakan's policies and actions to be more problematic than the Kemalists' authoritarian counter-measures to enforce a change of policy and regime.

Berlin's perception of the more moderate AKP, on the other hand, was largely positive until the party started to become more authoritarian. In the power struggle with the Kemalists, Germany supported Erdogan and described the AKP as the guarantor of stability, reforms and democracy. This is where one can locate Germany's "model" perception of Turkey – it is based primarily on the political-ideological transformation or moderation from the RP to AKP. Furthermore, the following factors played a role in Germany's support for the Erdogan government: (a) There was a change of paradigm on the German side, whereby the Kemalist state ideology was regarded as being less democratic and less capable of reform; (b) the AKP has been democratically elected and legitimated on several occasions and enjoys the wide support of the Turkish people; (c) the "civilian power" Germany respects the democratic self-determination of its partner country Turkey. However, it was not only this value orientation but also Berlin's national interests that were significant in supporting the AKP government. These interests include first and foremost Turkey's democratization but also its economic sta-



bilization – factors which not only alleviate German fears of poverty-induced immigration, but are also to Germany's advantage as a global export nation.

Nevertheless, the inner-Turkish power struggle was not without consequences for German politics. On the one hand, one can detect greater conflict sensitivity for the period under study, leading to adjustments in domestic and legal policy as well as in development cooperation. On the other hand, the increasing authoritarianism of the Erdogan government generated a policy of moderate "counterbalancing", whereby a strategy of "moderation through inclusion" supported and influenced the public sector in particular, and thus the ruling AKP at state and local government level. It is also striking that, despite the intercultural dialogue with Ankara, Berlin frequently referred to uncertainties concerning the "right way to deal" with Islam (AA 2008a). For example, although the delicate question of the headscarf ban was discussed behind closed doors, the Federal Government refrained from making public demands concerning a liberalization of this ban for fear of consequences for German domestic, legal and Länder policy (e.g. the statutory right of public-service employees to wear a headscarf).<sup>53</sup>

A further inconsistency on the German side is the party-political instrumentalization of Turkey's EU accession. Years of discussions in Germany on the "Privileged Partnership" are partly responsible for the slackening pace of the Turkish process of EU reform and for the fact that Ankara is looking around for more reliable partners. The culturalist argumentation against Turkish EU accession follows the rationalist but democratically legitimate scheme of converting growing Islamophobia among the German public following the attacks of 11 September into the comparative advantage of mobilizing voters (Schoen 2008; Leibold/Kühnel 2006). There is also great concern that in the event of EU accession, Turkish citizens in Germany would gain the right to take part in local elections and would possibly vote predominantly for "Red-Green" parties.<sup>54</sup> It is one of the central inconsistencies of German European and Turkish policy that all of this contradicted not only one of world's strongest norms of democratization, namely the EU's policy of conditionality, but also undermined Germany's own credibility when calling upon Turkey to heed democracy and human rights (especially for the Christian minority in Anatolia) as well as Germany's claims to be a "civilian power". It also fuelled anti-German sentiment both in Turkey and among the diaspora in Germany.

Nevertheless, the study clearly shows that, in the period under study, Germany was on the whole more focused on promoting democracy than the USA, whereby Washington was confronted more frequently with the classic conflict of interests and norms. It can be seen that both the USA and Germany acted pragmatically and supported those political forces in Turkey which were in the best position to help realize their own respective interests.

Furthermore, it can also be said that there has been a consolidation of the democratization process in Turkey as well as a perpetuation of the Kemalist defects inherent in Turkish democ-

53 Interviews with representatives of the Federal Government and the Federal Parliament.

54 Interview with a CDU MP.

racy. Whilst this paradox is due primarily to endogenous determining factors, it was also encouraged by the contradictory foreign, European and development policies of both donor countries.

## 6. Implications for “western” promoters of democracy in Turkey and in other Muslim states

The strengthening of political Islam and its elites frequently fuels conflicts and fears – not only in Turkey. “Western” donor countries in Turkey, as well as in other Muslim recipient countries, should not rashly dichotomize between the stereotypes of “good because secular and western” and “bad because Islamist and anti-western”. The example of Turkey shows that this is not only difficult, but can also lead to dilemmas and contradictory reactions in the donor countries themselves: Did the Kemalist military and the judiciary safeguard or harm Turkish democracy with their coups and threats of coups and bans on political parties? Does the 10% electoral threshold encourage political stability or exclusion? Is the headscarf an anti-secular Islamist symbol or does it allow women access to the public sphere and education in a patriarchal society?

It is therefore important for donors to closely consider their own understanding of democracy, but also that of the secular and Islamic elites in the partner country. The example of Turkey proves the need for, but also the complexity of, such measures. Although both donor states regularly criticized issues of democracy and human rights in Turkey, they avoided officially demanding the lowering of the 10% threshold despite the fact that this hurdle encouraged the distortion of power and the authoritarianism of the government party. The donors have not actively resolved the trade-off between greater “democratic participation vs. stability and governability”. This suggests that the donor countries supported the opinion of the European Court of Human Rights, which regards the threshold as “excessive” but not a priori undemocratic.<sup>55</sup>

A further example is the “headscarf” issue. Secular and Muslim elites (not only in Turkey) have their own understanding of democracy over this issue: The AKP argues that every woman should have the right to dress as she wishes, i.e. the wearing of a headscarf is defended as a basic right. The position of the Kemalist state elite, on the other hand, is quite different: It regards the Islamic headscarf as a political symbol. Furthermore, it points out that there is not only a freedom *of* religion but also a freedom *from* religion. On this question, the “western” donors (not only in Turkey) are confronted with the trade-offs “democracy vs. secularism” or “protection against Islamization vs. religious freedom for Muslims” and must generally ask themselves how much visible religion a secular (Muslim) state based on the rule of law *can* accept and how much religious freedom an (Islamic) democracy *must* grant. From the point of

<sup>55</sup> The decision of the Court refers to the case of “Yumak and Sadak v. Turkey”, Application no. 10226/03, cf. Council of Europe, [www.echr.coe.int/echr/Homepage\\_EN](http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/Homepage_EN) (15.10.2011).

view of the Islamic government parties in Turkey, the two donor states lost credibility when they rightly referred to the inadequate cultural rights of the Kurds and the lack of religious freedom for Christians, but at the same time avoided taking a stand on the rights of Muslims in Kemalist Turkey. This attitude reflects the uncertainty of many “western” donors when dealing with Islam and Islamic symbols in the public space. It is significant that neither donor country took an active decision regarding the dilemma over the headscarf issue, but instead reacted passively, that is to say, waited for a Turkish solution to relaxing the headscarf ban.

Losses of credibility may also occur as a result of discrimination against the Muslim minority in the donor states themselves (e.g. ban on headscarves for teachers, tightening of citizenship and immigration laws, etc.). Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September, one can observe a growing Islamophobia in some “western” states (including the USA and Germany), which does not only pose justified questions concerning the willingness of certain groups of Muslims in the diaspora to become integrated in the host society, but is also being instrumentalized for political purposes (e.g. minaret ban in Switzerland). These factors can also make the democratization work of the donor countries more difficult and lead to fierce claims of “double standards” in questions of democracy and human rights.

“Western” donor countries should also be careful not to choose their partners in Turkey or other Muslim states too hastily. For the sake of their own credibility, they should respect the results of democratic elections. This is particularly so when large major parties or catch-all movements (such as the AKP) take up Islamic issues in order not to leave them to (radical) Islamist splinter groups. The USA’s support for the Kemalists and references to constitutionalism were problematic in so far as large parts of the Turkish constitution are undemocratic.

Most “western” donor countries (including the USA and Germany) conduct foreign trade or security cooperation with authoritarian regimes for the sake of their own national interests. Turkey, like other Muslim partner states, is poor in resources, suffers from high unemployment and is threatened by terrorism. Donor countries should not therefore regard foreign trade and security agreements between these states and authoritarian states as signifying a priori a “turning away from the West”. Such agreements serve the legitimate goal of safeguarding own state interests.

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## Annex

**Table 1: Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Turkey according to the OECD Classification “Commitments” and “Disbursements”, figures in million USD**

	USA		Germany	
	Commitments	Disbursements	Commitments	Disbursements
1990	14.66	13.00	199.24	429.19
1991	325.36	325.00	342.88	322.75
1992	1.35	1.00	173.22	226.03
1993	200.40	200.00	123.11	201.07
1994	0.40	—	206.52	183.32
1995	165.71	166.00	101.45	200.67
1996	33.49	—	183.82	263.55
1997	22.32	—	310.22	190.69
1998	—	0.43	97.10	143.70
1999	4.12	1.97	124.33	152.50
2000	3.60	—	39.24	103.34
2001	1.20	1.63	92.65	131.77
2002	203.56	204.70	114.94	100.77
2003	1,008.22	7.28	71.91	124.78
2004	10.34	9.37	90.98	107.71
2005	16.11	12.87	87.34	115.48
2006	4.47	3.31	80.27	101.28
2007	11.66	7.08	81.05	111.61
2008	11.26	9.38	214.80	143.94
2009	12.10	5.10	106.90	160.30
Total	2,050.33	968.12	2,841.97	3,514.45

Note: This table is an own compilation. All the figures are taken from the OCED’s “QWIDS” database and/or the “Creditor Reporting System”. Gross figures, i.e. debt-related transactions and repayments by Turkey are not considered.



**Table 2: ODA in accordance with OECD classifications “Government & Civil Society”, “Public Sector” (Public) and “Civil Society” (NGO), figures in million USD**

	USA		Germany	
	Commitments Government & Civil Society	Disbursements Government & Civil Society	Commitments Government & Civil Society	Disbursements Government & Civil Society
2005	2.50 Public: 0.7 NGO: —	2.09 Public: 0.7 NGO: —	0.21 Public: 0.2 NGO: —	2.64 Public: 0.2 NGO: —
2006	1.50 Public: 0.2 NGO: —	1.43 Public: 0.2 NGO: —	5.65 Public: 3.7 NGO: 1.9	5.83 Public: 3.7 NGO: 2.1
2007	1.53 Public: 0.0* NGO: 1.5	1.64 Public: 0.1 NGO: 1.5	2.78 Public: 1.0 NGO: —	5.26 Public: 1.0 NGO: 2.5
2008	2.64 Public: 0.9 NGO: 1.7	2.65 Public: 1.0 NGO: 1.7	6.07 Public: 3.6 NGO: 2.4	5.80 Public: 3.4 NGO: 2.4
2009	2.20 Public: 0.9 NGO: 1.0	1.80 Public: 0.4 NGO: 1.0	3.60 Public: 3.4 NGO: 0.2	4.30 Public: 3.4 NGO: 0.9
Total	10.37 Public: 2.7 NGO: 4.2	9.61 Public: 2.4 NGO: 4.2	18.31 Public: 11.9 NGO: 4.5	23.83 Public: 11.7 NGO: 7.9

Note: This table is an own compilation, all figures are gross figures and taken from the OCED’s “QWIDS” database and/or the “Creditor Reporting System”. The distinction according to “Government & Civil Society” occurs sporadically since 1999, listing according to “Public” and “NGO” was only introduced in 2005. An asterisk (\*) behind the number “0.0” means that the level of the Commitment/Disbursement was under 50,000 USD.

**Table 3: National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Grants for projects related to Turkey, figures in thousand USD**

	NED Total	of which: International Republican Institute (IRI)	of which: National Democratic Institute (NDI)	of which: other NGO
1990	50.0	—	—	50.0
1991	156.1	—	—	156.1
1992	50.0	—	—	50.0
1993	48.8	48.8	—	—
1994	71.6	71.6	—	—
1995	309.7	249.7	—	60.0
1996	442.7	442.7	—	—
1997	671.6	299.6	203.7	168.3
1998	760.6	450.0	199.6	111.0
1999	651.3	278.7	211.8	160.8
2000	646.9	235.7	236.2	175.0
2001	717.6	309.9	284.2	123.5
2002	621.3	300.0	286.3	35.0
2003	899.2	330.0	300.0	269.2
2004	1,104.6	330.0	340.0	434.6
2005	1,397.9	530.0	350.0	517.9
2006	1,911.0	473.9	550.0	887.1
2007	1,679.9	700.0	390.0	589.9
2008	1,887.3	700.0	470.0	717.3
2009	925.3	—	495.0	430.3
Total	15,003.4	5,750.6	4,316.8	4,936.0

Note: This table is an own compilation, all figures are taken from the NED Annual Reports.

**Table 4: Commitments by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to German political foundations for projects related to Turkey, figures in thousand EUR**

	BMZ-Commitments Total	of which: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)	of which: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)	of which: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (FNF)	of which: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (HBS)	of which: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS)
1990	933	41	892	—	—	—
1991	1,454	1,329	125	—	—	—
1992	214	51	163	—	—	—
1993	365	—	345	—	20	—
1994	874	41	802	—	31	—
1995	1,861	767	930	77	87	—
1996	1,646	767	726	51	102	—
1997	3,036	1,023	1,173	511	329	—
1998	3,324	767	1,870	435	252	—
1999	2,696	767	1,104	435	390	—
2000	2,656	767	1,094	281	514	—
2001	2,365	460	1,242	305	358	—
2002	3,294	690	1,763	483	358	—
2003	2,603	690	950	440	523	—
2004	2,475	740	1,000	445	280	10
2005	3,515	740	1,720	450	470	135
2006	2,879	740	800	520	658	161
2007	2,472	740	800	400	457	75
2008	3,893	740	1,800	287	908	158
2009	3,043	927	860	372	734	150
Total	45,598	12,787	20,159	5,492	6,471	689

Note: This table is an own compilation. The figures are from the BMZ. In recent years, the BMZ has successively begun to grant more three-year commitments for regional projects (instead of for individual countries). The foundations are responsible for the precise allocation of the funds to the partner countries.